

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the present application based on the foregoing amendment and the following remarks are respectfully requested. The presently pending claims are 1, 3-4, 6, and 8-19.

In the Office Action, dated April 2, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3-19 in view of the newly cited prior art references Goodman (U.S. Patent No. 5,594,779), Knox (U.S. Patent No. 6,212,359), and other earlier cited references. Specifically, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, 5-6, 8, 13-15, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodman in view of Knox. Claims 4 and 16 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodman in view of Knox and further in view of Alperovich (U.S. Patent No. 6,138,002). Claims 7, 9-12, and 17-18 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodman in view of Knox and further in view of Bottum (U.S. Patent No. 6,014,569).

During an interview conducted on May 5, 2004, the Examiner indicated that combining features claimed in claim 5 and 7 with independent claims 1 and 14 would lead to allowable subject matter. In several telephone interviews, the Examiner reaffirmed this position. By this response, the Applicants have amended claims 1 and 14 by incorporating the features claimed in claims 5 and 7, which have been correspondingly cancelled.

If the Examiner no longer agrees that these Amendments place the claims in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned.

The addition of the limitations from former claims 5 and 7 to claims 1 and 14 should not be construed to imply that the Applicant believes the addition of these limitations is required for the claims to be patentable. It is merely a concession to the Examiner's view of the patentability of the claims. Accordingly, if the Examiner

should refuse entry of this Amendment, the Applicant reserves the right to reevaluate the allowable scope of the claims and present claims not including all of the limitations presently included in claims 1 and 14 (and the claims that depend therefrom).

In view of the foregoing, the claims are now believed to be in form for allowance, and such action is hereby solicited. If any point remains in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, he is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

Pillsbury Winthrop, LLP

By: 

Jeffrey D. Karceski

Reg. No.: 35,914

Tel. No.: (703) 905-2110

Fax No.: (703) 905-2500

JDK\QCH:ml
P.O. Box 10500
McLean, VA 22102
(703) 905-2000